



NEWS RELEASE

09-111

Today's Date: Thursday, October 29, 2009
District: 1 - Eureka
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALTRANS DISTRICT 1 EMPLOYEES RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S EMPLOYEE SAFETY AWARD

Eureka – Caltrans announced today that two District 1 employees recently received a Governor's Employee Safety Award. This award acknowledges outstanding contributions to safety or health resulting in the prevention of workplace injuries, accidents or illnesses, or for responding to a hazardous or life threatening event.

On July 16, 2008, Caltrans Highway Maintenance Worker Frank Toney had just left the Clearlake Oaks Maintenance yard, but realized he had forgotten something and was returning. Seeing a vehicle collision had just occurred outside the gates to the yard, he went to render aid. A thirteen year old boy was trapped in the passenger side of a plumbing van. Toney found a crowbar, peeled back a metal portion of the van, and aided the paramedics in extracting the boy. A medical helicopter was called to the scene, and Toney opened the yard to provide a convenient place for the helicopter to land, eliminating the need for it to land on the highway. Toney's quick actions aided in providing prompt medical evacuation of the injured teenager and prevented the closing of Route 20 during peak traffic hours.

During the summer of 2008, Route 299, the major link between Route 101 in Humboldt County and Interstate 5, was frequently closed due to fires. Route 36, which also connects to Interstate 5, was a vital link for the area during these closures of Route 299. On August 9, 2008, Equipment Operator II Steve Thurman was traveling along Route 36 and noticed a brush fire alongside the roadway. He radioed his supervisor for assistance and then proceeded to fight the fire with a shovel while periodically directing traffic to insure the travelling public was able to get past the fire safely. He continued on scene, working alone, to extinguish the flames until Cal Fire arrived and contained the fire. Thurman's actions helped to keep Route 36 open during this critical time.

"The actions of these two Maintenance employees went well beyond what we would expect of them in their normal duties," said Charlie Fielder, Caltrans District 1 Director. "Their integrity and commitment exemplify the values that are so important to Caltrans."

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